can be presented with information on their relative performances as part of the simulation. Such information can include, for example, a relative location of the users **12** on the simulated course. In this manner, the users **12** can experience a competitive environment while utilizing the treadmill **100**. In an embodiment, the treadmill **100** also can record a user's **12** performance in a routine, such as a simulated course, and present information to a user **12** (the same user or another individual) as the user **12** is utilizing the routine. The previous performance may have been performed on the same or a different treadmill **100**. In this manner, a user **12** can race against another user, the user's best time, and/or the like, while performing the routine.

While various aspects of the invention have been described in conjunction with a treadmill used for running, it is understood that aspects of the invention can be directed to other embodiments. For example, the treadmill can be utilized for walking, jogging, and/or the like, which can be performed for enjoyment by the individual, as part of a formal training regimen, and/or as part of a medical evaluation. Embodiments also can be directed to other forms of exercise. For example, an embodiment of the treadmill described herein can be configured to allow a bicycle to be peddled. To this extent, the treadmill can be configured with rollers at the front and rear of the platform, which have a circumference and height above the belt to allow a bicycle wheel to roll freely against the rollers. Other types of athletic activities can include simulated cross-country skiing, rowing, and/or the like.

While shown and described herein as a method and system for detecting a position of the user on the treadmill **100**, it is understood that aspects of the invention further provide various alternative embodiments. For example, in one embodiment, the invention provides a computer program fixed in at least one computer-readable medium, which when executed, enables a computer system to manage operation of the treadmill **100** using a process described herein. To this extent, the computer-readable medium includes program code, such as the management program **30** (FIG. **12**), which enables a computer system to implement some or all of a process described herein. It is understood that the term "computer-readable medium" comprises one or more of any type of tangible medium of expression, now known or later developed, from which a copy of the program code can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated by a computing device. For example, the computer-readable medium can comprise: one or more portable storage articles of manufacture; one or more memory/storage components of a computing device; and/or the like.

In another embodiment, the invention provides a method of providing a copy of program code, such as the management program **30** (FIG. **12**), which enables a computer system to implement some or all of a process described herein. In this case, a computer system can process a copy of the program code to generate and transmit, for reception at a second, distinct location, a set of data signals that has one or more of its characteristics set and/or changed in such a manner as to encode a copy of the program code in the set of data signals. Similarly, an embodiment of the invention provides a method of acquiring a copy of the program code, which includes a computer system receiving the set of data signals described herein, and translating the set of data signals into a copy of the computer program fixed in at least one computer-readable medium. In either case, the set of data signals can be transmitted/received using any type of communications link.

In still another embodiment, the invention provides a method of generating a system for managing operation of a treadmill **100** as described herein. In this case, the generating can include configuring a computer system, such as the computer system **20** (FIG. **12**), to implement a method of managing operation of the treadmill **100** described herein. The configuring can include obtaining (e.g., creating, maintaining, purchasing, modifying, using, making available, etc.) one or more hardware components, with or without one or more software modules, and setting up the components and/or modules to implement a process described herein. To this extent, the configuring can include deploying one or more components to the computer system, which can comprise one or more of: (1) installing program code on a computing device; (2) adding one or more computing and/or I/O devices to the computer system; (3) incorporating and/or modifying the computer system to enable it to perform a process described herein; and/or the like.

The foregoing description of various aspects of the invention has been presented for purposes of illustration and description. It is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the precise form disclosed, and obviously, many modifications and variations are possible. Such modifications and variations that may be apparent to an individual in the art are included within the scope of the invention as defined by the accompanying claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A treadmill comprising:

a platform;

a belt located around the platform;

means for rotating the belt around the platform to create an endless surface on which a user exercises;

a first side hand rail extending along at least approximately all of a first side of a usable area of a surface of the platform;

a set of user controls positioned on the first side hand rail and configured for use by the user while the user is exercising on the usable area of the surface of the platform with the first side hand rail located adjacent to a side of the user's body; and

a front structure comprising a ramped surface, wherein the ramped surface covers a front non-usable area of the belt and includes adequate structural support to prevent damage to the treadmill from downward pressure due to an impact of a foot of the user landing on the ramped surface due to the user striding past a usable area of the belt during use of the treadmill, and wherein the ramped surface extends from the belt at an incline and includes at least one of: a low friction material or a plurality of rotatable members, such that the foot of the user slides off of the ramped surface back onto the belt in response to the impact;

wherein a front of the treadmill includes no structure within reach of the user while the user is exercising on the usable area of the surface of the platform.

2. The treadmill of claim **1**, wherein the ramped surface is configured to withstand the downward pressure due to the impact of the foot of a running user weighing at least 230 pounds without damage to the ramped surface or the front structure.

3. The treadmill of claim **1**, further comprising means for providing tactile feedback to the user regarding at least one of: a lengthwise position of the user on the platform or a lateral position of the user on the belt.

4. The treadmill of claim **1**, further comprising a rear structure including a ramped surface covering a rear non-usable area of the surface of the platform.